

VZCZCXRO8014  
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHMOS  
DE RUEHGB #0681/01 0631555  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 041555Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3061  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000681

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/04/2026  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: SIGNS OF URBAN FABRIC FRAYING: SECTARIAN  
DISPLACEMENT IN BAGHDAD

Classified By: POL COUNS ROBERT S. FORD, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. In the aftermath of Samarra mosque bombing, Post has received reports of sectarian displacement in some Baghdad neighborhoods. The most credible and significant information is about approximately 150 Shia families who quit their homes in Abu Ghreib, Tarmiyah, and al Doura over the past week. These families (estimated at 5-6 persons each) fled because of attacks and intimidation and are now in makeshift shelters in Sadr City and in the Al Shoala neighborhood in Kadhimiyah. Post also received unconfirmed reports March 2 from the Sunni Waqf claiming that hundreds of Sunni families over the past week fled their mixed neighborhoods based on fears of MoI reprisals. Some political leaders say privately that not all of the displaced are truly displaced - instead, they are families that have long been homeless and are seeking help to settle somewhere. Thus, we do not know the true extent of the problem, but our contacts think that the problem of minority families being forced out of their homes is a new one and a harbinger of a seriously fraying social fabric. End Summary.

-----  
150 SHIA FAMILIES DISPLACED  
-----

¶2. (C) On February 26, Provincial Council Member Sheikh Isaah Al-Saady told PolOffs that 60-70 Shia families had fled their homes after receiving threats from Sunnis in the Baghdad neighborhoods of Abu Ghreib, Tarmiyah, Al Nahrawan, and Al Doura. Sheikh Isaah said the Shia families were attacked and threatened by Sunni Arab gangs in the days following the Samarra attack and had sought shelter in schools in the Al Shaola neighborhood of Baghdad's Al-Kadamiyah District. In a March 2 conversation, Sadr district Council member Hassan Shemeh told Pol FSN that an additional 65 Shia families had also fled their homes in the Abu Ghreib, Tarmiyah, Al Doura neighborhoods and were being provided temporary shelter and assistance in Sadr City.

¶3. (C) Deputy Minister of Human Rights Aida Ossairan confirmed these reports to Poloff on March 2. Saying that the families were still too fearful to return to their homes, she indicated they would continue to receive food and clothing from the Ministry as well as humanitarian organizations. Ossairan pointed out, however, that the Ministry teams visiting these groups reported a lack of running water for these families and a discontinuation of school study for the children previously attending these schools.

¶4. (C) When questioned by PolOff on February 27, Abu Ghreib Qada (District) Council Chairman Hamed Al-Amery initially denied any knowledge of the situation. However upon further investigation, he later told Poloff that 5 families had left the district because of terrorist threats. The chairman

added he has been in contact with these families and has offered to help them relocate to their homes. He indicated to Poloff that other Sunni families in the Abu Ghreib neighborhood have also invited the displaced families into their homes.

-----  
SUNNI FAMILIES REPORTED DISPLACED  
-----

15. (C) On March 2, Mohammed Al-Duleimy from the Sunni Waqf told PolFSN that over the past week more than Sunni 400 families had fled from their mixed neighborhood in Nahawan to the Diyala Bridge and Abu Ghreib areas in Baghdad. In a similar conversation, Al-Duleimy relayed to PolFSN that the primary reason for this movement was fear of MoI targeting.

16. (C) However, in a separate conversation on March 2 with Pol FSN, the District Council Chairman of Abu Ghreib said that he knew of only 20 Sunni families that had moved to the area in the past week. Additionally, Deputy Minister Ossairan told Poloff March 2 that while the Ministry was able to confirm reports of large numbers of Shia displacement, they were unable to do so for reports concerning Sunni Baghdad residents. The Deputy Minister admitted receiving anecdotal reports of Sunni displacement, but the detail was insufficient for verification.

-----  
Some Homeless - but Not Due to Threats  
-----

17. (C) Shia Islamist Dawa party official Ali Adeeb told us March 1 that while there were dozens of Shia families forced

BAGHDAD 00000681 002 OF 002

from their homes in Tarmiya, not all of those at the Shoala shelter were victims of Sunni intimidation. Some, he said, were long-time homeless people who had gone to the Shola center hoping to get help with housing. Shia SCIRI party official Taki al-Mawla made the same point in the March 2 meeting with the PM and political party leaders.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

18. (C) Forcing minority families at gunpoint out of neighborhoods is an indicator of Iraq's social fabric starting to fray. We had some reports like this in the past.

For example, some Shia families fled Lutifiya, south of Baghdad, last year in the face of Sunni Arab threats. Sheikh Al-Amery noted to Poloff that a number of Shia residents had left the Abu Ghreib neighborhood even before the Samarra attack due to intimidation. However, the number of families moving in the aftermath of Abu Ghreib appears bigger, and certainly these reports are gaining more attention and feeding perceptions more in these tense times. Our sense is that the more neighborhoods polarize, the more volatile Baghdad will become. Some Baghdad council members have made a positive move in reaching out to displaced families.

SATTERFIELD